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ABSTRACT

This paper discussed the rationale for using Peer Counselor-Consultant Training (PCCT) in cross-cultural, multiethnic schools. PCCT is an eclectic system which incorporates a consultation counselor role model, psychological education, and peer counselor training into a school counseling program. The overall objective is to develop the contexts in which personal growth and development can occur. The advantages of using the PCCT model in cross-cultural settings are that it: (1) encourages self-help activity; (2) utilizes modeling to influence behavior; (3) is self-motivating; (4) makes information explicit and available to everyone; (5) is based upon principles of exchange and reciprocity; (6) has direct classroom applications; and (7) is a subversive activity. A discussion of each of these seven points is presented. (Author)

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Peer Counselor-Consultant Training: A Self-Help Strategy For Cross-Cultural, Multi-Ethnic Schools*

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Counselors are becoming increasingly aware that culture and ethnicity are salient variables affecting counseling outcomes (Pederson, Lonner, and Draguns 1976). Some Counselor-educators have argued that a counselor cannot effectively help individuals of antoher culture because he or she does not have the cultural knowledge with which to understand and empathize with the client's experiences (Bardo, Bryson, and Cody 1974; Christensen 1975; Ivey 1977; Sue and Sue 1972; Vontress 1973; 1974; Williams and Kirkland 1971). Cultural barriers affecting the development of trust and rapport in the counselor-client relationship have been identified as differences of values, attitudes, language, expectations toward the counseling process, and the inappropriateness of the traditional counseling model for many ethnic minorities. Bryson and Berdo (1975) and Vontress (1970; 1971), for example, have stated that the ideal counselor candidate for a black is another black, based upon their similarities of cultural experiences and the experience of oppression. A less extreme position has been stated by Williams and Kirland (1971), who feel a white counselor can be effective only with the Negro essence of a black man -- the part which reflects the values of the dominant white culture.

The rationale of these arguments is based upon the principle that counselor-client similarities give the counselor more creditability. This creditability makes the counselor better able to influence the behavior of the client (Carkhuff 1969; Strong 1968). These arguments, however, are often moot

issues to the many conscientious counselors and psychologists who find themselves functioning in cross-cultural, multi-ethnic schools. In such settings the counselor, regardless of his or her own culture or ethnicity, must wrestle with the very important question: Can I effectively help a student of another culture? All students, however, have needs, and attempts must be made to meet these needs whether they are in the realm of racial issues, educational and vocational goals, or personal growth and development. Counselors must respond to the needs of culturally different students by incorporating into their programs techniques and mechanisms to circumvent the barriers in cross-cultural counseling.

In recent years, school counselors at all levels have utilized peer counseling (Gravitz and Woods 1976; Hamberg and Veranhorst 1972; McCann 1975; Schweisheimer and Walberg 1976; Sue 1973; Varenhorst 1973; 1974; 1976) and psychological education (Andersen and Love 1973; Dowd 1976; Gumaer 1973) as ways to circumvent the cultural barriers to effective counseling. These programs have attempted to train students in counseling skills so their natural rapport with their peers could be utilized as a resource. These programs, however, appear to be lacking in two very important areas. First, they do not redefine the role of the counselor or the peer counselor in relation to the school system. It is necessary that the use of peers be accompanied by a redefinition of the goals of the overall counseling program. Second, there has been a paucity of discussion centering on the rationale for

the use of peer counseling and psychological education in junior and senior high schools.

The purpose of this paper is to present the rationale for the use of a peer counselor-consultant training model (PCCT) in junior and senior high schools with a mixed cultural population. We have drawn heavily in the discussion that follows on our own experiences as white counselors implementing a PCCT program in a rural Hawaiian high school (Folen, Fullmer, Furlong, Kahaulelio 1977). Our objective is to stimulate counselors and administrators in multi-ethnic schools, to closely examine the goals and philosophy of their counseling programs.

PCCT Model

Peer counselor-consultant training (PCCT) is an eclectic system composed on elements familiar to most counselors. It is a tool which can be used to restructure the school environment and provide new contexts for all participants in the school community (i.e., students, teachers, parents, counselors and administrators), which permit "personal growth" and development to occur (Fullmer and Bernard 1972). This is accomplished by repairing, establishing and maintaining communication networks among all school personnel, students and their families (Blocher and Rapoza 1972; Carlson 1972).

These objectives are accomplished in three basic ways. First, the role of the school counselor is defined primarily as a counselor-consultant (Fullmer and Bernard 1972; Kehas 1969). In this capacity the counselor actively seeks to

influence the learning milieu of the students by working with school personnel teams comprised of teachers, parents, and administrators. The objective is to enable the student to gain more "self knowledge" (Fullmer and Bernard 1972).

Secondly, psychological education is utilized in groups comprised of students, parents, teachers, preferably all three. Structured group experiences are used as a medium through which the counselor can share his or her communication skills with the school community. In these groups the participants become more self-aware, increase their repertoire of interpersonal behavior skills, and obtain basic communication skills so that they can reach each other with messages and meanings that match. In addition, the group of roles of leadership and supervision are shared with all of the participants. This strategy is particularly desireable because it enables the students to experientially learn the skills necessary for successful living and to pass these skills on to other individuals in the school community. The use of a group modality enables the students to determine their own definition of success without values being imposed by the counselor (Fullmer and Furlong 1976). Such a training model has been described as a preferred method of counseling (Carkhuff 1969; Egan 1975; Gerler 1976). The training strategy used in the PCCT model encourages the widespread dissemination of skills throughout the school setting.

Thirdly, a peer counseling program is initiated with those students, teachers, and parents who have a high level of

creditability among their peers. These individuals are encouraged to develop skills which enable them to help others help themselves. These skills are different than the skills acquired through psychological education programs. They include self-awareness, genuineness, authenticity, empathy, compassion, sharing, warning (dangers and risks are pointed out), support, appropriate expectations, acceptance, understanding, caring, and encouragement. The goal of the peer counselor is to help his or her peers to be able to identify feelings, describe them, articulate general principles affecting their feelings, and finally, to experiment with new behaviors. Once these skills are acquired by the peer counselors they constitute a valuable school resource--they can make themselves available to the school counselor, operate on their own, or preferably do both.

In short, peer counselor-consultant training is a strategy which defines a process through which each student, teacher, counselor, parent, and administrator can be engaged in the business of self-development for himself or herself. The process is, however, enhanced by interpersonal involvement, thus hightening the impact of the program on the school milieu (Fullmer and Bernard 1972). The advantages of utilizing such a program in a cross-cultural, multi-ethnic school setting are

1. it encourages <u>self-help</u> activity;
2. it utilizes <u>modeling</u> to influence behavior;
3. it is <u>self-motivating</u>;
4. it makes <u>information explicit</u> and available to everyone;

5. it is based upon principles of exchange and reciprocity;
6. it has direct classroom applications; and
7. it is a subversive activity.

Self-Help

The self-help concept (Farson 1969; O'Brien and Lewis 1975; Riessman 1965) is based on the premise that change in individuals occurs when they accept responsitility for their own development (Arbuckle 1976). The PCCT program strives to develop self-help activities by defining the school as an interconnected community of individuals whose cooperatively shared skills constitute its single greatest resource. Such an approach is democratic and inclusionary, as opposed to the traditional power structure of the school which is autocratic and exclusionary. All participants are defined as equals, and the active participation of as many parents and students as possible is sought. An emphasis on self-help activities assist the counselor to circumvent the mistrust many ethnic minorities have for the traditional counseling models (Bryson and Berdo 1975; Leviton 1977; Russell 1970). Traditional counseling processes used with ethnic minorities have the effect of pacification, social control, or adaption to the school order (Ivey 1976). The PCCT model enables students with different values, attitudes and goals to define their own options in an adaptive atmosphere which respects their culture.

In multi-ethnic schools it is necessary to do more than

provide the culturally different student (it should be noted that we were the cultural outsiders) with a peer acting as a mini-counselor. The problems faced by culturally different students may not be related to the dynamics of their personal development; in this sense peer counseling programs alone are not sufficient to meet their needs. A black student, for example, can obtain some catharsis in laying his or her frustrations with racism exhibited in the school to another black peer trained in counseling skills--this will not solve all of the individual's problems. In the PCCT framework, problems encountered by the students, parents, and counselors are defined as school problems, not individual problems.

Pearl (1974) warns that paraprofessionals recruited from various cultural groups have often been used as cheap labor, cosmetics, agents of technical progress and pacifiers. The peer counselor role here defined is not an appendage to the existing functions of the school counselor. The peers are not operating in support of the school system and its norms. Rather, they are a vital and necessary component of an overall attempt to maximize the learning milieu in multi-ethnic schools. Their functions, while not sufficient to meet all of the students' needs, are equally important as those of the counselor, administrator, teacher, and parent. The peers are given communication skills which enable them to more fully act as advocates for their own self-interest--this is self-help!

Modeling

The climate necessary for successful cross-cultural

counseling consists of trust and rapport (Vontress 1971). Cross-cultural encounters in our society are often characterized by mistrust, suspicion, anger, and negativism (Bryson and Berdo 1975). Peer counselors have been used as a means to "bridge" the gap between the necessary conditions of successful counseling and the social realities of our society. This approach to cross-cultural counseling is based on the principle that learning is easier when the personal characteristics of the source of the information or behavior are similar to the receiver's. Thoresen, Hosford, and Krumboltz (1970) have observed that high school students are more likely to imitate the behavior of high status student peers than other individuals. The incorporation of such a modeling effect is vital to any peer program.

The PCCT program incorporates this principle by first identifying the peer systems of the school, and then determining who the peer stars are within those systems. Student peer stars are not necessarily those identified as outstanding students by conventional measures of school success--high grade point average, school officer, athlete--but are the students who have the greatest number of contacts with the greatest number of students in the school. These peer stars are the hubs through which the peer group communications circulate. By utilizing these peer stars in the initial psychological education groups, immediate communication links are made with the greatest number of students possible. This goal is particularly important in multi-ethnic schools because 1) it helps to alleviate the peer

system/school authority system dychotomy, and 2) it enables the peer stars, as primary transmitters and disseminators of the peer group culture, to translate all of the psychological education activities into forms readily interpretable by their peers. Language barriers (in our case all of the students spoke Hawaiian Pidgin English which constitutes an important part of their cultural bond) can thus be circumvented by allowing the students to rerun the activities presented to them and to transform them into more culturally meaningful experiences. The goal is not to force psychological education exercises on the students but to encourage activity and involvement. Learning is a result of action (Carkhuff and Berenson 1967).

The modeling effect is doubled as those students who have creditability among their peers and a natural inclination to be warm and empathic are identified and provided intensive counselor training. These "superstars" represent the leadership potential of the school community. In giving these individuals the skills to communicate their desires openly and clearly, we are ensuring that the desires of their culture will be adequately voiced. Our premise is that there is a direct and positive relationship between the communication skills of the influential peers and the openness of the communication networks in the school community.

Self-motivation

Throughout the PCCT program all participants are free to define the limits of their participation: from day to day, from week to week. The goal is to make the students' involvment

self-motivating and self-reinforcing. This is accomplished by giving the students, parents, and teachers communication skills which they in turn can share with other individuals. The key to this objective is in the training modality of the psychological education component. As the participants are given the experience of group leadership and the responsibility of sharing their skills with others, they perceive the necessity to become proficient in these communication skills. Self-motivation is exhibited in activities such as hobbies, sports, and pastimes which are engaged in for their own sake; that is, they are self-reinforcing. Self-motivation in the PCCT program is enhanced because the students have a stake in their own performance and in the development of the program.

In addition, it has been shown that peer leadership involvement is in itself beneficial (Gumaer 1971; Varenhorst 1976; Zucker and Brown 1966). A PCCT program offers a way 1) to mobilize the students own creativity and talents, 2) to let them utilize these talents in ways appropriate for their culture, 3) to have the important experience of knowing that they have something of worth to offer, and 4) to know that their full participation is desired. This encourages self-motivating behavior, thus offering a way to circumvent the alienation experienced by many culturally different students.

Explicit Information

Unstated assumptions or hidden agendas are certainly one of the most important barriers to effective communication

across cultures. Counselors are concerned with the development of clear and concise communication with students of different cultures. The PCCT model, operating from a democratic, inclusionary perspective, seeks to disseminate information to the entire school community. Students, parents, and teachers are informed of the rationale supporting all school policies and activities so that they may be included in the final decision making process. Information in a multi-ethnic school must be explicit and not implicit. If this end is sought, then concerns related to prejudice and racism can be openly discussed and not acted out in passive aggressive behaviors.

A goal of the phychological education component is to enable the students to identify their feelings and emotions and then to accurately describe them. This alone constitutes a major step in the direction of establishing an open communication network in a multi-ethnic school. It is important that the counselors themselves act as models by being open and honest in their communications with the students. If the counselor does not understand what is being communicated to him or her by a culturally different student, this lack of understanding should be voiced. The counselor must also act as an advocate for open communication by exposing any barriers to effective communication, such as a lack of student input on school committees, or the lack of clear paths for students to voice greviences. In this way the counselors' role is one of a change agent or an onebudsman. If open communication can be established between the counselor and a cadre of students, then any information can be disseminated to students, who for personal o

institutional reasons are isolated from the counselor's influence.

Our experience has shown that the local Hawaiian students (Hawaiian, Samoan, Tongan, Filipino, and Japanese) became very open in their communications. They could admit that a boycott of a psychological education training session was due to the introduction of several Tongan students. The students were able to state their emotions openly, discuss their reactions to the situation and arrive at their own solution. The following week all of the students were in attendance.

Exchange and Reciprocity

Counselors have skills, experiences, and organizational abilities which can be used by culturally different students to develop mechanisms for self-help. The students in exchange have a wealth of ideas, creations, insights, experiences, peer contacts, genuineness, and the ability to identify with the experience of their culture. The PCCT program is a community and action oriented model, that is, the way to create harmony in any social system (such as a school) is to initiate cooperative self-help activities. A sense of cohesiveness among the students, parents, and teachers is established by the process of engaging in a common task such as training other groups. The task involves risk-taking and results in the development of a sense of accomplishment and mutual support. Harmony in any group can only develop when the participants are willing to say, "You teach me what you know, or else I will never learn it." This is the very foundation of the PCCT

model in multi-ethnic schools.

Classroom Applications

In cross-cultural, multi-ethnic schools, one of the most important responsibilities of the counselor is to develop a correspondence between his or her programs and those implemented by teachers in classrooms. There must be a coordinated effort by the counselor and the teacher to provide the students with experiences that are relevant to their own developmental and cultural experiences (Kohn 1975; Vriend 1969). The PCCT program has direct applications to the classroom. In the psychological education component, the students are given the skills necessary to lead and carry out group activities. These skills are provided by the counselor, but they can be used by the teacher in the classroom. Learning is maximized when the student and teacher roles are experienced by the students. For example, a science class can be subdivided into teams of three or four students. Each team could then research specific facts of principles and share these with other groups in the class. The students are better able to carry out such activities because they were trained in effective group communication. We have developed classroom applications with the use of American Plains Indians folklore stories, value clarification, career development, venereal disease, math, literature, and recreation. The concept is that once the students are given the ability to effectively engage in group activities, they are no longer limited by the boundries of a text or a workbook. A more effective link between subject matter and affect can be realized.

In multi-ethnic schools such an approach acknowledges the differing strengths and aptitudes of the students. It acknowledges the fact that all students have not had the same life experiences; this can, however, act as another learning dimension. The purpose of the model is to add affective content through interpersonal relations to whatever subject matter the teacher might want to use.

Subversive Activity

Communication and involvement are subversive activities in a school because they initiate change. When individuals meet each other and communicate with messages and meanings that match they are subverting the formal and informal authority systems of the school. The PCCT program is subversive because it seeks to disseminate these communication skills throughout the school. The students are included in the authority structure of the school. Their full participation is solicited and reciprocated with real power and influence. Involvement is an incompatible condition of alienation. Counselors often encounter alienated students who find more relevance for their current situation in the peer group than in school participation. The PCCT program is subversive of the peer group because it incorporates it into the school system. In such a context change will follow.

Sue (1973) describes the implementation of a peer counseling program at a major university. The program and its goals were developed prior to the recruitment of the students.

At the orientation meeting, conflicts arose. The students demanded that the program reflect their own needs and objectives. Perhaps the confrontation was a blessing in disguise. In being flexible the originators of the program included the students in a redevelopment of the programs objectives. In the reformulation process the students became more involved, the program became a reflection of themselves, and the implementors became more informed of their own need to rely on the students if the program was to be a success.

The rationale for the inclusion of the informal peer culture into the authority structure of the school is that it has ramifications throughout the rest of the school. No longer will counselors, teachers, or administrators be able to talk past the students; to ignore their responsibility by saying the students cannot be reached. The students will demand that there be no hidden agendas and that all messages and meanings match.

The use of a PCCT program is also subversive of the traditional power structure of the school. Counselors who plan to incorporate such a peer model should be prepared to act as an advocate for the needs of the students. Involvement will breed change!

In Hawaii, we found that student involvement had a multiplicative effect. The counselor in the high school became very involved and wanted to know more about peer counselor-consultant training. The students went to their classes with the new skills and made additional demands on their teachers. The teachers also saw the need to learn more about their

student's experiences. Out of this energy, a continuing education course was developed for the counselors and teachers of the school with the students acting as group trainers.

PCCT is subversive because it takes energy that would have been invested in isolate activity and redirects it to the school community. It is important to add, however, that the counselor in a multi-ethnic school seeks involvement, not a prespecified outcome. The students will generate their own outcomes in conjunction with the rest of the school personnel. This involvement does not mean that solutions to school problems will reflect the values of the counselors or the administration. In Hawaii, the relationship between local Hawaiian, Samoan, and Tongan students at a high school where the PCCT program was implemented often errupted into "beefs" (fights). A recent session with the peer counselors (all of the students already had psychological education group leadership training) was initiated by asking the students what they could do to reduce the fighting among the ethnic groups in the school. Two hours of intense and sometimes heated debate ensued with the final conclusion being that the students did not know of any other alternative than to "make beef." Such an activity is subversive because a discussion among the leaders of the different ethnic peer groups would not have occurred naturally. This dialogue will have repercussions throughout the school and will initiate change in other students, teachers, and the administration.

Summary: An Analogy

PCCT and other peer based counseling systems are effective because the counselor acknowledges the fact that he or she may not be the best qualified to provide interpersonal feedback to culturally different students. A speech therapist, for example, might use a mirror or tactile sensation to give a child feedback on how he or she is pronouncing a word. A speech therapist provides the student with feedback from a variety of sources so that the child can better understand the direction he or she must take to achieve the speech task. Counselors working with culturally different students similarly have a responsibility to provide feedback that is understandable, pertinent, relevant, and accurate. The counselor's objectives, however, are more difficult to specify. The goals of the speech therapist are usually obvious and clear. The goals of the counselor working with culturally different students are not so clear. The speech therapist can observe the needs of a child with a speech related need. Can a counselor observe the needs of a culturally different student, or will he or she define the student's needs from an ethnocentric position which does not acknowledge or respect the student's life experiences? The counselor may not be able to provide the student with feedback that is helpful. It is the counselor's responsibility, then, to provide the student with alternative sources of feedback--psychological education group experiences and peer counselors are alternative sources of feedback available in junior and senior high schools.

Our analogy can only be carried so far. Culturally different students do not have cultural deficiencies in the same manner as the child with a speech disorder has a speech deficiency. The deficiencies are in the counseling models used in schools and in the counselor's ability to give relevant and timely feedback to students of another culture.

It is unrealistic to expect that all counselors will be equally effective with all culturally and ethnically different students. It is very realistic, however, to expect that we as counselors and school psychologists will actively seek to develop the contexts through which all students, parents, and teachers will have a source of relevant feedback and will be able to engage in the process of self-help. PCCT is our attempt to reach this goal.

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